**12 ways to get the best out of your board** 

**Making effective use of your IWB can enrich the teaching and learning experience. Here are a few tips for getting the best out of your interactive whiteboard.**

**1. Location, location**

Always think about where the board is positioned and space around it. Make sure there's plenty of room for you to access all parts of the screen (without blocking the view). Also ensure that students can comfortably reach most of the board – perhaps have a step made to help them.

**2. Get to know your board**

Practise using the board and the software before you use them in a lesson. The vendor should offer you basic training. Also, prepare and save files before class to reduce in-lesson preparation time. Keep the files where you can easily find and open them.

**3. Make sure everyone can see**

Check that colours and writing size can be seen from the back of the classroom. Use a good clear font (like Arial or Comic Sans) and large size text. Avoid bad colour combinations such as red on green, which can be hard to read. A pale pastel background colour instead of white can make black text easier to read. Also try shadow on text or objects. Ensure that light (natural and artificial) is not affecting visibility. Clean any smudges and dust from the screen and data projector lens.

**4. 'One view' pages**

Try to create documents that do not need to scroll up and down to be viewed. For example, instead of three paragraphs on one page, add one paragraph to three pages. Think about spacing your work well to leave room for annotations and comments.

**5. Turn it over to your students**

Okay, so they'll be learning … just like you. But let your students explore the board and experiment with functions. Give them a go and see what they can come up with. After all, they're supposed to be the digital natives. Maybe ask them to prepare a presentation about themselves, or review a book or topic. Offer them the opportunity and responsibility to work things out and show how they want to learn. You will probably be pleasantly surprised.

**6. Full screen mode**

Desktops can be distracting. There can be a lot going on, especially around the edges, to occupy easily-distracted young minds. If you're viewing websites or watching video, consider activating full screen mode to get as much of the page on the screen as possible, as well as making the page more visible.

**7. It's not a flip chart, so don't pretend it is**

Don't be tempted to settle into a routine of creating slide after slide with you as the voice-over. Interactive whiteboards are just that, interactive. Think about where it's appropriate to make pages, or slides, interactive. This could involve students coming out to manipulate some text or a diagram, or typing directly into the computer. A good, whizzy game or hands-on activity will get your class's attention. Think of IWBs as resources for developing questioning and interactive learning, rather than just as tools for presenting information.

**8. Go Online**

Having the laptop or PC that's connected to your board also connected to the Internet is a must. There's an extensive range of IWB-related resources available online. But don't forget to check the appropriateness of a website before accessing in class – this can be anything from improper content to illegible font size, or it may be offline when you need it!

**9. Multimedia resources**

Images are powerful learning tools, and IWBs are the prefect way to use them. In fact, multimedia as a whole – combining websites, text documents, CD-ROMs, TV, podcasts, video, and DVDs – can help the teaching/learning process. By adding hyperlinks within your main whiteboard software you can move between websites, programs or media by simply clicking on an icon. Of course, not everything is suitable for whiteboards, but you won't know until you try.

**10. Consider peripherals**

You may want to think about using video cameras, voting systems and scanners with your whiteboard, things that make your lessons fun and exciting. Document cameras, for example, can become extremely powerful tools when used with an IWB. Anything placed under them is projected in giant-size onto the board, so a painting or perhaps a bug or flower is visible in amazing detail.

**11. Go Wireless**

Consider using a wireless keyboard. This saves dashing back to your computer each time you want to enter text, and will give you the opportunity to teach from anywhere in the classroom. You'll also get to experience a students' eye view of the lesson – they can even participate, too.

**12. Pace yourself**

Don't rush! IWB technology increases efficiency and the speed with which you can present the next step in the lesson … just make sure it's not too quickly. Think of it as providing you with extra time for focusing on the teaching and discussion.

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